

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

9 June 1983

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 2-C

Papandreou will be unpredictable, but may tone down, analysts believe

By Steve Twomey
Inquirer Staff Writer

PARIS — During the electoral campaign in Greece that ended last week, the Socialist Party of Andreas Papandreou promised that, if he won re-election as prime minister, the big American naval and air bases that so often have inflamed segments of the Greek people would be closed at last. "Definitely," was the word.

Papandreou was, indeed, re-elected last Sunday. And at a news conference three days later, he was asked about the promise concerning the bases. He hedged. He punted. He dodged. And when he had finished, what he would do was no clearer, nor was when he would do it.

Which meant, of course, that in his second term as leader of the 9.8 million Greeks, Papandreou offered the possibility of being every bit as rock-steady and unchangeable as he had been in his first.

Which means, of course, that it will not be boring.

"We cannot predict what he's going to do. Nobody can predict what he's going to do," John Lampas, a newspaper columnist and Papandreou critic, said in a telephone interview from Athens.

During his first 43 months in office, Papandreou, 66, a former college professor in the United States, carved out a reputation as one of the most unfathomable leaders in the West, baffling Greece's allies with rhetoric that seemed pro-Soviet at times and with positions that rarely stayed put.

He threatened to pull Greece out of NATO, but did not; to quit the European Economic Community (EEC), but has not; to get rid of the American bases, but did not; to improve relations with Eastern and Third World countries, and did.

He called America imperialistic and said that the Korean Air Lines 747 shot down by the Soviets had been on a CIA spying mission, while he praised the Polish leaders, attacked Solidarity and went to Moscow for a summit that oozed goodwill.

All this hardly went over well in Western capitals. But his quixotic streak appealed to the only folks who mattered, the Greeks, who seemed to enjoy seeing their country play a more independent role in the world. In voting last Sunday, they gave Papandreou's Socialist Party, Pasok, 46 percent of the vote and 161 of the 300 seats in parliament, enough to form a government again.

"His foreign policy, with certain exceptions among extremists, is accepted by the voters, this idea of the maverick," said John C. Loulis, director of the Center for Political Research and Information in Athens. "There is no doubt about that."

Actually, Pasok's performance was down from 1981, when it got 2.25 percent more of the votes and 13 more seats. But after four turbulent years in office and a fierce campaign waged by the leading opposition party, New Democracy under Constantine Mitsotakis — not to mention the fact that incumbent parties have a tougher time the second time around — the size of the victory surprised almost everyone.

"That's a remarkable showing," said a U.S. official who asked not to be identified. Domestic, rather than foreign, affairs largely made it possible, according to several analysts interviewed by telephone.

Pasok did well in rural areas — because, ironically, farmers have benefited from subsidies from the European Economic Community that Papandreou once wanted to leave —

and among the working class, whose wages have kept up with inflation. His pledge to make Greece a welfare state clearly had more allure than Mitsotakis' portrait of a society suffocating under socialism and excessive governmental interference.

While the record of Papandreou's

first term makes forecasting a risky business, most analysts believe that, far from being emboldened by his victory to stake out even more radical positions, Papandreou will tone down in the coming months.

A key reason is that the voters he was often seeking to please with his anti-Western, anti-American rhetoric — the far left — could be a spent force for now.

The pro-Moscow Communist Party (there is a smaller Eurocommunist group, too) did poorly in the election, winning just under 10 percent of the vote. Many leftist voters are believed to have cast ballots instead for the Socialists, making it possible for them to win an absolute majority and avoid the necessity of forming a coalition with the Communists.

"He's had his victory. He doesn't need to show off to the left," Helen Vlachow, a conservative publisher, said.

"Being more confident and having smashed the left, he will feel much less dependent on them in any way, and he will feel freer to pursue the policies of moderation," Loulis said. "My impression is his tone will be much more moderate."

Papandreou himself has sought to create that impression. At his victory news conference last week, he forecast "considerably improving" rela-

Continued

tions with the United States, which bore the brunt of his rhetoric in the first term. Even before the election, he had said he expected "calmer" periods ahead.

They are, to a degree, a necessity. One reason is Turkey, Greece's overriding foreign policy concern. The two neighbors have been feuding for years over the future of Cyprus, the independent island divided now between its Greek and Turkish populations, and over air and sea rights surrounding the hundreds of Greek islands in the eastern Aegean Sea.

Because Turkey is much bigger in population and has much larger armed forces, Greece cannot afford to alienate the West, upon which it depends for military equipment and training to offset its rival.

That is why even in his first term Papandreou's actions were less radical than his words. That is why Greece remains in NATO, long after the Socialists promised to get out. That is why the American bases remain, long after Papandreou promised to get rid of them.

"NATO provides a number of various protections without which Greece would be in difficulty," the U.S. official said.

Further, the Greek economy is in bad shape, though not bad enough that it cost the Socialists the election. Inflation is running at 20 percent, unemployment at 10.

Many analysts believe that Papandreou will have to tend to this problem first, rather than pursuing any goal of making himself an independent player on the world scene, a bridge among East, West and Third World.

Needing Western help to improve the economy, he will have to insure that relations with the West are in good shape.

"The East and the Third World are all right, but they don't have any money," Vlachow said. "The problem at this moment is economics, and unemployment. ... Because he has such horrible economic problems, he has to get help from the West."

Throughout the next four years, though, Papandreou will have to contend with a principal opposition party that is stronger, despite the size of his victory. While the Communists suffered, New Democracy actually did better than at any time in its history, winning nearly 41 percent of the vote and 125 seats.

Though right-wing critics often have contended that Papandreou ultimately seeks to turn Greece into a one-party socialist state, even some conservative analysts said in the aftermath of the election that a multi-party system seems entrenched, for now at least.